MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP
OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1980

IN UNITY

an editorial

witch hunts heretics & visions

By Rev. Elder Troy Perry

In late summer, 1969, four individuals worked as a committee to develop what was to become the founding By-laws of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. Contained within those by-laws (which were approved by the 1st General Conference of the UFMCC) is the Doctrinal Statement of our denomination.

That statement proclaimed to the world that we were "founded in the interest of offering a Church home to all who confess and believe." (Confess and believe what?) In the first paragraph of our doctrinal statement we proclaim boldly "Christianity is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and is the religion set forth in the Scriptures . . . the Old Testament foretells Him, the New Testament presents Him and the Christian Church proclaims Him in every age and in every land." We then went on to state concisely, "the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches moves in the mainstream of Christianity."

Our little committee had no way of knowing the furor these simple words would cause us from some of the so-called religious community. How dare we, a group of predominantly gay and lesbian people, call ourselves Christian. Not only call ourselves Christian, but also orthodox Christians.

When God called me to found Metropolitan Community Church, the message God gave me to preach was that Jesus had come and lived and died and had paid the price for all our sins on Calvary. Also, that Jesus had arisen from the dead and we worship Him as our risen Sovereign and Saviour. The thing that set the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches apart in the minds of many open-minded Church people outside of our Fellowship was that we boldly used the Bible to defend our faith. We did not claim that Jesus came down out of a flying saucer and gave Troy Perry a set of gold tablets and proclaim gay men and lesbians the new-found lost tribe of Israel. No, we stated simply, "Our faith is based upon the principles outlined in the historic creeds: Apostles and Nicene." Our by-laws went on to state:

We believe:

1. In one triune God, of one substance, in the persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, God being the Creator of all, the Prime Mover and Spirit of the Universe.
2. That the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God, showing forth God to every person through the law and the prophets, and finally, completely and ultimately on earth in the being of Jesus Christ.
3. That Jesus . . . The Christ . . . historically recorded as living some 2,000 years before this writing, is the Father's most divine Son, as well as being the Son of Man, born of Woman. And that by total subservience to God, the Father, Jesus has demonstrated once and forever that all people are likewise Children of God, being spiritually made in God's image.
4. That the Holy Spirit is God making known God's love and interest to all people. The Holy Spirit is God, available to and working through all who are willing to place their welfare in God's keeping.
5. Every person is justified by Grace to God through faith in Jesus Christ.
6. We are saved from loneliness, despair and degradation through God's gift of grace, as was declared by our Master. Such grace is not earned, but is a pure gift from a God of pure love. We further commend the Fellowship of the Faithful to a life of prayer; to seek genuine forgiveness for unkind, thoughtless and unloving acts; and to a committed life of Christian service.
7. The Church serves to bring all people to God through Christ. To this end, it shall arrange for regular services of worship, prayer, interpretation of the Scriptures and edification through the teaching and preaching of the Word.

The three most important points made in our doctrinal statement (in my mind) are first, we are trinitarian, second we believe the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God, and three, we believe we receive salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. All of which makes us an authentic Christian Church.

Throughout our by-laws we affirm over and over again that we *are* a Christian Church. We make no apologies for that. We are *not* a Unitarian or inter-faith religious group, we *are* the Church of Jesus Christ, the Church of the Living God.

The word Christian means that there are some basic beliefs to being identified as Christian. One of those beliefs is that Jesus Christ is the Logos, and that God is revealed to us in three persons: Creator, Redeemer, Sustaining Spirit (in most translations of Scripture: Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and that the second person, identified as Redeemer or Son, is Jesus Christ.

Before Jesus died on the cross, he spoke to the apostles about his work as a part of the triune Godhead when he said, "But when the Comforter is come, whom *I will send* to you from the Creator even the spirit of truth, which proceeds from the Creator, the Holy Spirit will testify of me: And you also shall bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning (John 15:26-27). After his death and resurrection, as he was being worshipped by his followers as the risen God/Saviour/Sovereign he said, "All power is given to me in heaven and earth. Go, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." (Matthew 28:18-20). After their "infillment" on the day of Pentecost, the early Church started its task. According to Martin E. Marty in his book, "A Short History of Christianity" the early Church had a common creed, Kyrios Christos, "Christ is Lord."

Since the founding of the UFMCC's twelve years ago, I, as a Fellowship minister, have preached what I consider a simple truth: Jesus is the second person of the Godhead and is God and we are to worship him. I preach, baptize and serve communion in the name of Jesus. That is the vision I have seen.

Witch Hunt. An intensive effort to discover and expose disloyalty, subversion, dishonesty, or the like

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IN UNITY

Offices at 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 304, Los Angeles, California 90029

LIAISON ELDER
Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry

EDITOR
T. Earlye Scott

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS
Kurt Kreisler
Pepper Shields

COVER DESIGN
T. Earlye Scott

ILLUSTRATION
Richard Gallnitz-O'Dell

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The appearance of a name in this magazine does not denote affectional or sexual preference.

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DOCTRINE, SACRAMENTS AND RITES

A. DOCTRINE: Christianity is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and is the religion set forth in the Scriptures. The Old Testament foretells him, the New Testament presents him, and the Christian Church proclaims him in every age and in every land.

Founded in the interest of offering a church home to all who confess and believe, the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches moves in the mainstream of Christianity.

Our faith is based upon the principles outlined in the historic creeds: Apostles and Nicene. We believe:

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The skeletons in God's closet

By Rev. Bob Arthur

As we approach Christmas, most of us begin to remember and reread the familiar Christmas story as found in the Gospels. Of course the most familiar of those passages is found in Luke 2. But let's not overlook the account found in Matthew as well. Whereas Luke was a Gentile writing for a Gentile audience, Matthew was a Jew writing for a Jewish audience. Because of this we find different emphases in the two accounts.

Jewish tradition teaches that if any mortal were to look upon the face of God, that person would surely die. Yet Hebrew prophesy foretold the day when God would come to dwell among people, and provide a reign of justice and righteousness. It is further prophesied that God would enter this world as a child (Isaiah 9:6-7). For this reason, combined with the Hebrew understanding of Genesis 3:15, every Hebrew mother hoped to be the mother of that child who would be the Messiah, God actually present on earth.

Now Matthew is telling us that an angel of God told Joseph that his fiancee, Mary, was to be that chosen woman, whose child would actually be God: Immanuel, which means in Hebrew, God with us (Matthew 1:20-23). When the child was born they actually named Him Jesus: Jehovah - salvation (Matthew 1:25).
The magi in their search for Jesus actually refer to Him as the Christ (Matthew 2:4) : the anointed One, or the Messiah.

Of course, with just this much of a presentation: God has arrived as the child of a woman to be salvation, Matthew has established that he is telling a bizarre and revolutionary story to the Jews of his day. But just how bizarre and revolutionary, we often overlook. For how many times have we skipped over that tedious list of names found as the genealogy of Jesus in Chapter One?

Matthew was living in a day and age similar to ours in many respects. He had to deal with the Pharisees who wouldn't think of associating with anyone in any way involved in incest, prostitution, homosexuality, adultery or childbirth out of wedlock. (Sound like some of our preachers in Christendom today?) Yes, he had the audacity to say that the very being of God had entered this world as a human child, in whose background were those involved in incest, prostitution, a possible lesbian mother, an adultress and the product of an unwed mother.

You ask, "Where does Matthew make such claims?" He does so very subtly in that long list of the names of Jesus' ancestors. Check it out. There are five women mentioned in an otherwise all male list of ancestors.

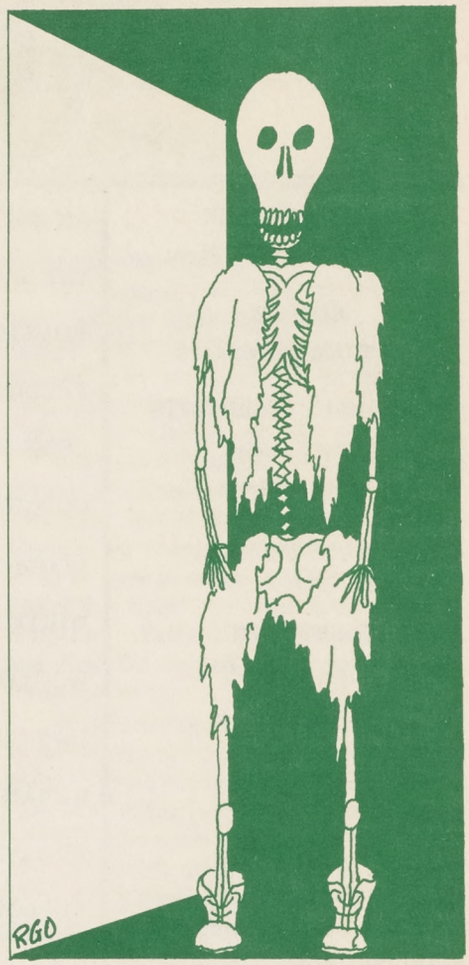
1. Tamar (1:3) cf. Genesis 38. It seems that Tamar was the daughter-in-law of Judah, who disguised herself and tricked Judah into sexual intercourse with her. Although he thought he was using a prostitute, he was actually committing incest.

2. Rahab (1:15) cf. Joshua 2:1. Rahab was the professional prostitute who housed the Israelite spies when they were planning their assault on Jericho.

3. Ruth (1:5) cf. Ruth 1:14-18. Of course not everyone would agree that the relationship between Ruth and Naomi was a lesbian relationship. However there is certainly sufficient question to list her as a possible lesbian mother. She seemed to have made Matthew's list of women whose description might be found "questionable" in the minds of the Paarisees.

4. Bathsheba (1:6) cf. II Samuel II. We remember how David saw the beauty of Bathsheba and had sexual intimacy with her. When he found that she was pregnant he had her husband, Uriah, killed. She was most certainly guilty of adultery, according to Jewish law.

5. Mary (1:16) cf. Matthew 1:18-25. Now here was a woman who was found by her fiance to be pregnant before he had even been intimate with her. What greater dishonor can a child have, according to Pharisaical teaching, than to be born out of wedlock?



Yet Matthew cunningly puts all five women in the listing of Jesus' ancestors. Why? Is there a message here we need to hear? Is there a message here we need to preach? Perhaps we should think twice before condemning someone who doesn't live up to our own code of morals. Could it be that we might condemn a person selected by God to be a vessel of great service in the plan of God? If God chose for the ancestry of the physical appearance of God on earth such people as Matthew mentions, certainly God is not concerned with people's lifestyles. Rather the primary concern of our God is to bring salvation from the bondage of sin to those who will receive it. (Remember: sin is "missing the mark," or the separation of a person from God.)

As we enter the Christmas season this year, let us truly get the Spirit of Christmas: Jesus the Christ, the Savior of all who will receive, has come to earth. That coming is not to condemn the world, or the people in it, but rather to bring us back into union with God and one another.

Houston responds

Dear Editor:

At our open board meeting last evening, our Pastor, Rev. Larsen, shared with those present the telephone conversation he had with you yesterday afternoon. This letter is in response to your request for clarification of the actions of the Board of Directors of MCCR regarding the June/July issue of In Unity.

Upon receipt of the In Unity magazine, they are distributed to the staff, Board of Directors and Christian Service Area chairpersons. The remainder are set aside and given to visitors during our welcome prior to each worship service.

The Christian Service Areas (CSA) are all chaired by lay people and consist of 1 staff member, 1 board member and congregational members. These groups act as advisory groups to our Board of Directors and cover all phases of our church activities; CSA I, Inreach/ Outreach; CSA II, Worship; CSA III, Christian Education; and CSA IV, Administration.

When our CSA groups met (which is once a month) CSA IV brought up for discussion, the article in the June/July issue of In Unity written by Rev. Shelley Hamilton. There was a great deal of concern by these members over some of her statements in that article, which we have expressed in earlier correspondence. CSA III also expressed to CSA IV, their concerns. These two groups presented their suggestions regarding this situation to the Board of Directors.

The issue was discussed at two open board meetings, with input from the congregational members present. As a result of these meetings and discussions, the In Unitys were returned with a brief explanation to you. The congregation recommended the Board also advise Rev. Perry of their feelings, which we did. Rev. Perry responded and offered to meet with us the latter part of August when he would be in Houston. The Board, along with a number of our congregation met with Rev. Perry. During the meeting he expressed that he had been under the impression that the Board had made the decision regarding the return of the In Unity on their own and was quite distressed. After the meeting he said that he now understood the situation and circumstances that brought about the actions of the Board and was comfortable and in agreeance with the Board's decision to follow the wishes expressed by the congregation.

We expect that this letter will clear up any misunderstandings or misinterpretations that might be held by our brothers and sisters in this Fellowship.

In Christ's Love and Service,

Rev. Charles W. Larsen, Pastor
Katherine P. Schulte, Clerk

Editor's Note: The editor wishes to thank the Houston Church for its letter clarifying their decision regarding IN UNITY.

START PLANNING FOR THE TENTH GENERAL CONFERENCE

TO BE HELD IN HOUSTON, TEXAS

AT THE SHAMROCK HILTON HOTEL

AUGUST 3rd through the 9th

LESBIAN AND GAY CUBAN REFUGEES

STILL NEED YOUR HELP.
IF YOU CAN HELP - OR FOR MORE INFORMATION - CALL : (213) 464-5100

Feedback

Dear T. Earlye and In Unity staff:

As I read the "Feedback" section of the last (September-October) issue of "In Unity," I felt as if I were progressing backward through time. It seemed as if I had returned to my 1950's church where "what we believe" was the only acceptable opinion and any deviation from this "party line" was reason for strict discipline. Part of that, "this we believe," was condemnation of homosexuals. My discipline for breaking that code was an immediate, one-way ticket home from my mission field and out of that church.

After a long time in my own spiritual desert, I found MCC and shortly thereafter began to devour "In Unity" and "The Gay Christian." I was overjoyed to find an opinion journal and a theological magazine which discussed God's dealings with humanity in a contemporary and challenging manner. Of course, I have not always agreed with what I read, but I am pleased and impressed that these magazines provide an opportunity for divergent views to be expressed.

From this perspective, I am deeply saddened to read such vehement rhetoric from those within our Fellowship who would censor their church members from the opportunity of reading "In Unity." Is it possible that those who disagree with the content of one or more articles cannot distinguish between opinion and official statement? Or are we to believe that there are those within the UFMCC who would have every word printed in "In Unity" scrutinized and "corrected" by an official censor before publication?

Our entire heritage as Lesbian and Gay Christians has been to be told that we could not exist, that the terms "gay" and "Christian" were mutually exclusive. We have been censored out of Christian history by those who professed to be concerned with "the good of the church," (or whatever "good" they were espousing at the moment.) I sincerely hope that none of us will become guilty of that same tunnel-visioned short sightedness.

You are correct. We have all been burned, bombed, censored and denigrated by a hostile world at one time or another. God forbid that any one of us should attempt to perpetuate those evils within our own Fellowship.

Keep up the good work so that freedom of expression may continue to be one of the hallmarks of "In Unity." God Bless.

Betty A. Brolsma
De Colores MCC
Canoga Park, CA

Dear T. Earlye,

Your editorial "The Bottom Line" was a real disappointment as it avoided the real bottom line.

The bottom line is not censorship. Rather, it is whether or not IN UNITY is a Christian magazine or not. For Rev. (?) Shelley Hamilton to say that she did not believe that Jesus Christ is God is a serious reflection on her spiritual state. For IN UNITY to print such a statement is spiritual irresponsibility.

In MCC we can tolerate doctrinal differences, but that is not a license to parade a totally non-Christian concept in our Fellowship magazine.

Thank God for MCC Houston's returning of those magazines. It does my heart good to see that UFMCC has some people with spiritual backbone.

Articles like that by Rev. Hamilton containing non-Christian statements can contribute to nothing good within us except to cause us to pray for the author's soul.

Yours In Christ,

Walter J. Rhodes
San Antonio, TX

Dear Ms. Scott:

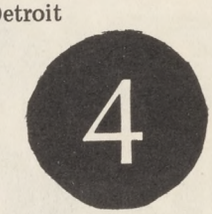
I very much appreciated and enjoyed T. Earlye Scott's editorial on censorship. I was both shocked and distraught to hear that a board of directors and some members of this Fellowship would return IN UNITY because they disagreed with an article in the magazine.

I thought we had settled this issue of "protecting" the laity some time ago. As a lay person in this Fellowship, who enjoys being challenged to think about different points of view, I appreciated the article by Rev. Shelley Hamilton. Whether I agree with Rev. Hamilton or not, reading theology of this type helps me to form my own theology, to become more firm in some of my beliefs and to question others. I feel that the lay people of this fellowship can not only handle theology that is different from official MCC dogma but can benefit from it. A diet of theological pablum will not develop a strong, thinking laity, which is what we claim to desire.

I am very glad that the board of directors and other lay leaders of my church don't make decisions to protect me from things that might make me think. If they did, I'm afraid I would have to examine just how well they were representing me.

Faithfully yours,

Jackie Walker
MCC Detroit



Dear Ms. Scott:

I am disturbed and disgusted by the continuing nonsense, bordering on heresy. Your editorial in the September/October issue is the last straw. To cry "censorship" when what has been rejected is unedifying and treasonous to the Kingdom of God, is a cheap excuse. If heresy and unacceptable deviation from some body of doctrine can never be allowed to divide us, then we can have no meaningful unity, either. If

"anything goes" then nothing matters.

I don't want to hear any more of it and I request that any further issues of In Unity due me be dropped. The magazine is unhelpful, unedifying and unwelcome.

Thank you,

Kip Smith
Denver, CO

Dear Ms. Scott,

I am the Worship Coordinator of a small MCC study group in the Northeast of England. The gay community in this region is parochial, discreet and politically passive and the populace in general are indifferent to Christ's gospel. Added to this is the fact that no one in our small and struggling group can devote anything like as much time to the Fellowship's work as he/she would like to. But we all nevertheless believe in MCC's ministry and vocation and the power of God at work in us.

It is in view of how unified we all need to be in MCC's work that I am very disturbed by some contributions from some American brothers and sisters in September/October 1980's IN UNITY. Like you, Ms. Scott, and Rev. Brenda Cisneros-Hunt, I am astonished that people in our Fellowship are beginning to adopt the attitude that those opinions which do not quite square with their own have no right to be expressed in a magazine which is intended to be a forum for the whole Church!

I in particular hope that the somewhat hysterically expressed sentiments of Mr. Howard Dulany are not overwhelmingly representative of feeling in UFMCC. He seems to have jumped to the rather premature conclusion that when IN UNITY allows an individual person, like Rev. Shelley Hamilton, to express her admittedly unorthodox views in its pages, it is decisively endorsing them as its 'stand'. How anyone could accuse IN UNITY of this, with its enormously engaging diversity of expressed viewpoints, is beyond me. Perhaps Mr. Dulany would like the magazine to adopt such a position towards his particular view. God forbid! Suffice it to say that I, like him, am an orthodox Trinitarian Christian, but I take the view that just becuase orthodoxy is orthodoxy does not give it sole and exclusive right of expression -- or, for that matter, freedom from the need for sound theological defense and exposition!!

I view the action of our sisters and brothers of Houston MCC in returning their IN UNITYs with sadness, therefore. Perhaps they feel that their faith is not strong enough to stand up to the bracing and healthy winds of dissent, and that it must be shielded from it at all costs. I cannot know. At any rate I look forward to seeing them in Houston next year.

I would like to thank Rev. Hamilton for a deeply moving and insightful article in June/July IN UNITY. Whatever her doctrinal views I am satisfied that God moves in and speaks to her. Our theological quarrels apparently do not affect God!

I sincerely pray that our Fellowship, which is full of people who have suffered from narrow-mindedness and bigotry in other churches, is not developing a tendency to elitist and exclusivist attitudes.

Let us continue to respect one another in our disagreements and love each other and learn from one another.

Meanwhile my co-MCCers in the Northeast and I will continue to enjoy the wonderful variety of material IN UNITY offers!

In the love of Jesus Christ,

Steve Bolam
Worship Coordinator
MCC Northeast in Newcastle
England

Dear Ms. Scott:

When I read through the August/September issue of IN UNITY, I was most upset with your editorial about censorship.

We are very much a diverse Fellowship. From the Canadian vantage point, the mosaic that is the UFMCC can be clearly seen. We will have times when we disagree with each other on both theological and political issues. Even when we disagree, our commonality in Jesus Christ can keep us together. If, however, we choose to attack one another when we disagree, that bond of unity truly suffers.

When the Board of Directors of MCC of the Resurrection chose to return the June/July issue of IN UNITY, they were doing what they felt they had to do. Whether I agree with them or not, I must support them, for they are part of our Fellowship. When I read your editorial, all I saw was an attack on that church. Where is our unity there? Was it not one of your country's forebearers that said, "If we do not stand together, then we will hang separately"?

I urge you to issue an apology to MCC of the Resurrection and re-affirm the unity that must be an intrinsic part of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

In Christ's love & liberation,

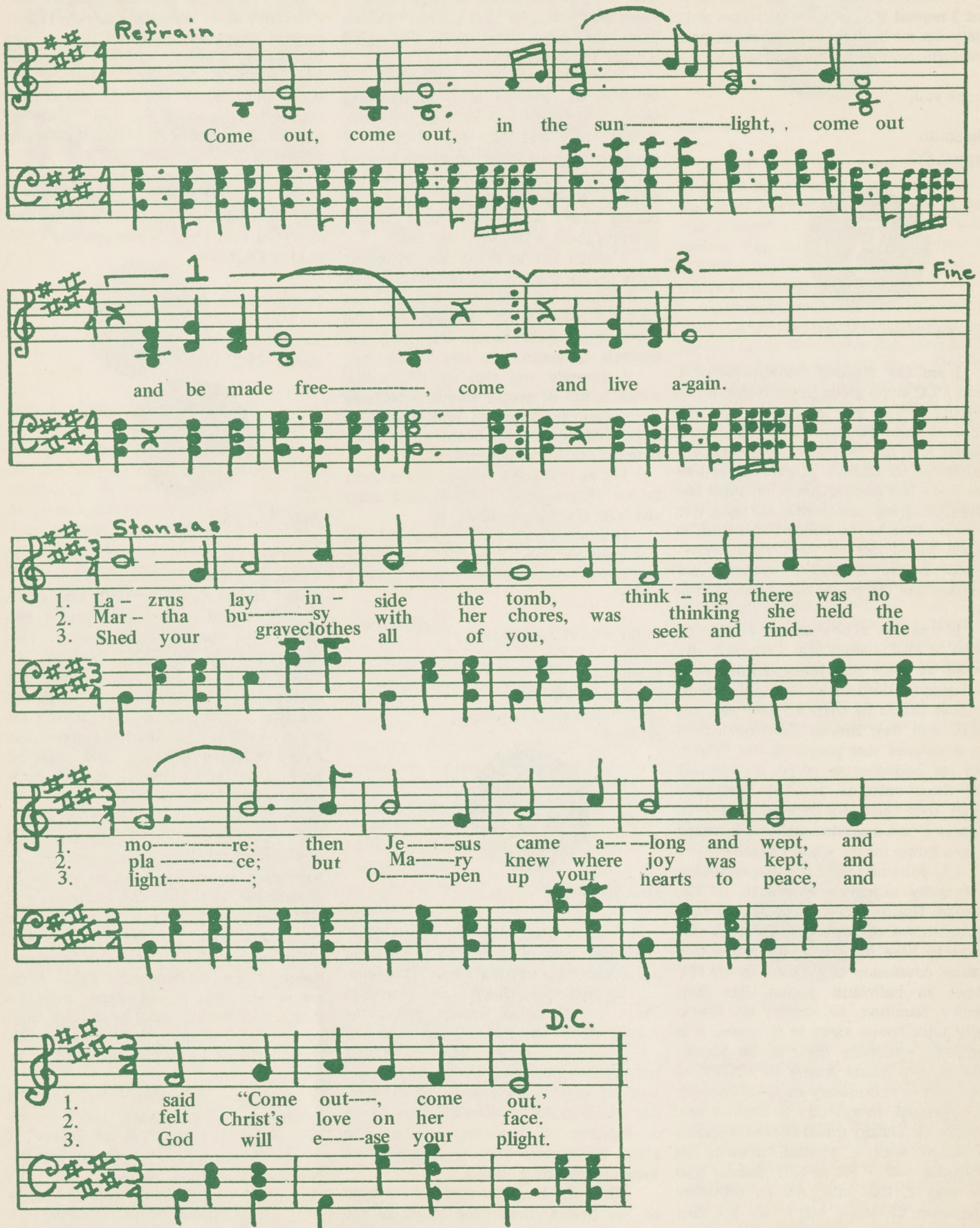
Reverend David A. Gunton
Pastor - MCC Vancouver

Dear Ms. Scott:

The recent UFMCC brouhaha over Reverend Shelley Hamilton's article, "The Trek," in the June/July 1980 issue of IN UNITY should be put into proper perspective for our Fellowship quickly. For, the censorship by MCC Houston, the choosing up of sides based upon the personalities and statements involved, and the issue of the purpose of IN UNITY are all in question. But there is a deeper and more troubling question that must be brought out of its closet: do such statements really hurt the laity? Should it be the responsibility of the Elders, the clergy, the editor of IN UNITY, the boards of directors of the Fellowship's churches, or any other person, persons, or groups to protect the laity from any information at all? Sadly, there seem to be some in our Fellowship who feel that the mentality which prompted the "Save Our Children" campaign was fundamentally right: there are certain ideas so dangerously powerful that certain persons must be shielded from them. Unfortunately, this hogwash is too easily believed by those who stand to be hurt most by it.

Reverend Hamilton's controversial statements are very clearly noted by her own use of the terms "I do not believe . . . . " and "I believe . . . . ", both cast into the personal and thus removed from the burden of having to be official church

FEEDBACK continued on page 14

Come Out!

Refrain
Come out, come out, in the sun-----light, come out
1
2
Fine
and be made free-----, come and live a-gain.
Stanzas
1. La - zrus lay in - side the tomb, think - ing there was no
2. Mar - tha bu-----sy with her chores, was thinking she held the
3. Shed your graveclothes all of you, seek and find-- the
1. mo-----re; then Je-----sus came a---long and wept, and
2. pla-----ce; but Ma-----ry knew where joy was kept, and
3. light-----; O-----pen up your hearts to peace, and
D.C.
1. said "Come out----, come out.'
2. felt Christ's love on her face.
3. God will e-----ase your plight.

Words and music by Jim Kerber (verse 2 by Jodi Safier), M.C.C. East Bay. This song was written following M.C.C. East Bay's first "Operation Resurrection" January, 1978.

Communion—*A DIFFERENT VIEW*

By Steve Stahl

In any discussion of communion, I feel the central question need not be what is it but rather what does it do for the individuals giving and receiving. I say this at the risk of sounding simplistic but I strongly feel that the true theological question lies with the personal and communal dynamics of the communion experience.

The question has been approached from both sides (i.e., what is it to what does it do - what does it do to what is it) for centuries and this discussion has become increasingly divisive in recent history. In all fairness to the Transubstantiation vs. Con-substantiation vs. Symbol scholars, let me briefly address this paper to them.

We know that God has taken countless different forms (faces) to reveal God-self to us. Remember the burning bush? The pillar of fire? The pillar of smoke? And countless other forms over recorded time? Today we are fond of saying that we see God in nature, animals, waterfalls, mountaintops, each other, etc. Since we work from the premise that God has been and is now seen in so many things, how can we assume that communion ("bread and wine") must fall rigidly into one of our accepted modes of view. Isn't it possible for the elements to be physically changed into the "Body and Blood of Christ" *and* simply remain physical elements entered into and surrounded by Christ's presence *and* be simply symbolic? Can't our God handle such a task? Can't we assume that God is capable of such an undertaking? Certainly . . . . . and that's the answer. Our God, who is so many different things to so many people can certainly provide a "meal" to satisfy the most humanly "discriminating" tastes.

From my point of view, the debate about what the elements are and/or become is interesting but empty. It is interesting as an intellectual exercise but empty as a statement of faith. Indeed, I feel it tends to erode the strength of some of the faithful because it implies that we have, can and will expose the "one face" of God and be able to define the limits of God's abilities through the use of human logic. To me such an idea (while highly human) is blasphemy! Who are we to define God's power and who are we to say that we are so elevated that we can!

So we are left with the question: What does communion do? While we could argue much along the lines previously explored, there are some things that happen during communion that we can "define."

First, the person giving communion becomes a directed instrument of God. (of course, the individual must be receptive to that direction.) We have all heard that this is true and tradition would dictate it. However, a much more convincing argument comes from conversations with persons who have been in this situation. Communion servers frequently say and feel things to/for their people that they ordinarily would not say and feel. They become incisive --- at the risk of saying it, "mystical" --- and emphatic.

On a wider scale, they perform a function very similar to the hub of a wheel; physically embracing and joining together in Christ whole groups of the community, there-by serving to signal to the community and the world that we are "One In Christ." All this through the direction and Grace of God!

Second, the individual receiving communion has a personal and community experience through the action of the Spirit. (Again, if they are open to it.) What those experiences are vary from person to person and, within given individuals, from time to time.

We know that tradition tells us that this meal is a time of cleansing ("forgiveness of sins"), renewal, rebirth and sharing with the risen Christ. Again, however, we must not close our minds to God's ability to make this time much, much more (and, unfortunately, our human ability to make it much, much less). No person, except the indifferent, will ever experience the movement of the Spirit the same way twice (?). The experience is always different, or at least is perceived to be so.

Beyond the individual experience(s), there is the experience of becoming part of the community as a whole --- Part of the larger "Body of Christ." For me, this is the time when the "Priesthood of All Believers" becomes a reality. A time when all are moving in the Spirit (in whatever form that may take). And communion is SO MUCH MORE!!

So we see that by casting aside the "burning" theological problems of what is communion and concentrating instead on what does it do, we expand our concept of communion beyond the parameters of human understanding. How can mere mortals begin to understand all the variables present in a communion experience? And isn't that just the point! If we admit that we cannot begin to define God and God's powers, we must also admit that we can never delineate the entire communion experience. It is bigger and more encompassing than the Universe itself. It is a gift from God --- who is so vast that, like the "peace," is beyond (total) understanding.

Liturgy For 25 Persons (or less)

On the altar are placed 5 cups and 5 plates. Form five groups of people.

General Leader asks for people to make Silent Confession. No absolution at this point.

General Institution and Consecration --- Leader Speaks:

COMMUNION continued on page 16

Advertisement

INTERESTED IN GRADUATE DEGREE?

Do you want a B.A. or M.A. in Gay Studies or Psychology or some other area of study?

I will send you information about a reputable college with state approved programs.

You may stay where you are, continue your present job while earning your degree, get credit for life experience.

Government grants (BEOG) and various student loans (NDSL, GSL, FISL) available for eligible applicants.

Write: *Rev. Richard R. Mickley, M.A.*
Box 2645
Los Angeles, CA 90051

Elders' Meeting Update

(Sept. 15-19 Elders Meeting
in Los Angeles)

The Board of Elders met September 15-19 in Los Angeles, California. The bulk of our meeting was set aside for long and short range planning, including meeting with a travel agent for General Conference travel, meeting with a consulting-fund raising firm; and with representatives from a word-processing firm concerning future equipment purchase.

Our planning session (not completed) included discussion of District expansion, including ideas such as matching funds for Districts with viable extension programs, redistricting, increased Elders visitation; World Church Extension plans; building towards a staffed Christian Education Department; looking at the future of MCAC, need for staffing, etc. Planning will continue in January.

Advisory Letters: The Elders passed the following motion regarding the status of Elders advisory letters:

"1) That all advisory letters issued prior to August, 1979, be referred to the By-laws Commission and the Commission on Government, Structures and Systems for them to incorporate into their processes. They are only historical and informational. They are our collective wisdom, which these bodies may use or ignore. *They are in no sense "in effect," unless they have been included into the Fellowship By-Laws, or adopted by us as Fellowship Standard Operating Procedures (see below), or legislated by General Conference.*

2) All advisory letters post-August, 1979, are, in a sense, being tested. As soon as we pass them we refer them to the appropriate Committee, if necessary. Further, they will be divided into the following:

A. *Advisory By-laws interpretation.*

If a local Church or Pastor or Board asks us for an interpretation of the UFMCC By-laws we may give them a provisional one -- but only if it is clearly *not* a matter of local option. We can say no more or no less than the By-laws say. Repeated requests for interpretation on a specific sentence or passage may indicate unclear or confusing wording, which we would ask the By-laws Committee to correct. The only authority our advisory letters will have is the authority of our credibility as Elders.

B. *Fellowship Standard Operating Procedures.*

Presently included in the "advisory letters" are, really, Fellowship S.O.P.'s which are perfectly within the duty and obligation of the Elders to develop. By that we mean, Fellowship procedures for Holy Union record-keeping, membership and employment policies, policies on confidentiality, job descriptions for District Coordinators, etc. These may be easily compiled into a small booklet, and easily changed and adapted as we go along. They are subject to the same accountability process as all Elders decisions, but they are not specifically *voted* on by General Conference or through By-laws procedures. They are an in-house matter. However, they explicitly *exclude* matters pertaining to the *internal* operation of a local Church or District."

MISSION STATUS: was granted to Pikes Peak MCC (Colorado Springs), Springfield Family MCC (Springfield, MO), Calvary MCC (Redwood City, CA) and MCC of the Resurrection (Auckland, New Zealand).

RESETTLEMENT AND ADOPTION AGENCY: The Universal Fellowship will be exploring becoming a permanent resettlement and adoption agency for gay and lesbian aliens in the U.S. A detailed report was received on the Cuban Relief Effort (See article in In Unity).

The new budget was approved with the understanding that it will be reviewed at our March meeting.

The UFMCC has hired "Americom," a consulting and fund raising firm to help us in a Fellowship-wide evaluation and fund-raising project.

Moved to budget into the General Conference budget the production and advertising cost for a television show introducing the Fellowship to the U.S. We will make the tape available in cities where Churches will help raise money for the air time.

Reverend Jeff Pulling and Ms. Jean Gralley were appointed to be the Worship Directors of General Conference, 1981 in Houston.

white house

By Adele Starr

I speak to you today as the mother of 5 children, one of whom happens to be gay, and as representative of the NATIONAL FEDERATION OF PARENTS & FRIENDS OF GAYS, supporting our lesbian daughters and gay sons.

Gay persons do have families - parents and other relatives who, like some of you, believed at one time the awful myths and misinformation about homosexuality. We did a lot of learning ourselves to understand our children. The more we learned, the more we realized the oppression and injustices gay persons have had to endure, simply because they were different and afraid to speak out.

We know firsthand the tragedies caused by misguided parents and other people towards gays. There have been suicides, family separations, teenagers thrown out of their homes, discrimination in employment and housing, etc.

As parents, we have learned that it is just as natural for gay persons to be attracted

World Church Extension

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Greetings in the name of Christ, our Saviour.

This letter is to thank you once again for your contribution to UFMCC World Church Extension 1980 and to update you on the present World Church Extension efforts.

This year has flown by very quickly and has been a very interesting one as far as World Church Extension is concerned. There is movement in various places around Europe and great movement in New Zealand and Nigeria.

I feel we have much to praise the Lord for, for the growth that is coming into Europe. Here in Europe we are not avid church goers - only 3 percent of the British population ever attend church and only ½ percent of the Danish and Scandinavian population. As to the rest of Europe, it waivers between the ½ percent and 3 percent. So, as you can imagine, it is a very difficult area, a real mission area.

The visit of Rev. Troy Perry to Britain and Denmark was a great boost to the morale of the MCC groups in both countries. People came from all over Britain to hear Troy and we were able to hold the main service in one of the Anglican Churches in London, where many people heard him. In Denmark he was also well received, although the fundamentalists came out to heckle outside the church.

The group in Copenhagen is growing. Rev. Bjorn Marcusson has just spent ten days here in England with us, learning more about the Fellowship and sharing with us. Bjorn is also hoping to start a fortnightly service in Malmo, Sweden. There is a group of people there who are interested in gathering together to learn more about God and more about MCC.

We have continuing contact with people in Poland. For awhile Stanley, our main contact, was being questioned by the State Police there for his activities, but we praise the Lord that that has now stopped and he seems to be able to move and hold prayermeetings in his home quite easily. Stanley has gathered one or two people together and they are meeting in his home. We have also a contact now in Hungary, a young man who has been visiting London and has now returned to his home country, and he is interested in contacting the group in Poland and trying to work out something for the Eastern Block. Maybe they will be able to all gather together at some point. It is wonderful the way the Lord is working in the Eastern Zone. We have much to praise the Lord for.

Rev. Jose von Buhler was able to go to Spain earlier this year and meet with the group there that had requested to know more about us. They are so interested that he is going back again in September and will be able to share more with them about UFMCC. This group has asked that we could keep in close contact with them for one year and after that they would make a decision whether they felt they could affiliate with us or not.

Here in England we continue to grow slowly. It is hard work, there is much ground to be broken. The Lord is opening up new areas to us and we are seeing each group become more established. We do need more workers, more ministers, who can come and help to train people. There are many people who write in asking for help to start groups in outlying areas but at present we have no way of doing this.

Rev. Sylvanus Maduka, in Nigeria, writes that everything is going very well there. They are growing, they have now seven congregations and they seem to be quite large, they have their own choirs and seem to be forging ahead in everything that they do. However, they do have many needs. One of the needs that Rev. Maduka has on his heart is a maternity clinic to help the people there, and an under fives clinic as well. Sometimes in our Western countries, we do not realise fully the lack of social services in the African countries.

Rev. Kromer and Rev. Harris are doing very well in New Zealand. They seem to be forging ahead with the group and have

WORLD continued on page 17

conference — ON FAMILIES

to the same sex as it is for those of us who are heterosexual to be attracted to the opposite sex. We have also learned that there is no pattern to the kind of family that has a gay child. Our families are as varied - ethnically, economically, culturally and in religion, as families where there are no gay members; and just as varied in number of children, temperament of parents, etc. We feel after several years of meeting with parents and gay persons all over the country that our children were probably born with a predisposition to homosexuality, just as some people are left-handed or have blue eyes.

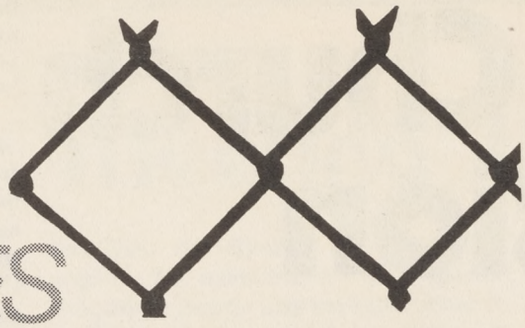
We know our children better than anybody else. We know they are fine, moral, responsible citizens who have the same aspirations as the rest of us.

Do you know that many of our parents are afraid to speak out on behalf of their children for fear of losing their jobs, too? And in some parts of the country parents are in fear of their very lives.

This has to stop. Family members here today - I appeal to you to stop this discrimination against gay persons and their families. We ask for an Executive Order and Proclamation to prevent further discrimination in housing, employment, in government institutions like the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the branches of the armed services. We ask for sensitivity and understanding in educational programs wherever it is needed.

We are all God's children. Give our children, all our children their human and civil rights!

GAY CUBAN REFUGEES



By Rev. Frank Scott

The news about *Gay* Cuban Refugees was as unexpected as a stray bomb exploding in the midst of our community. 20,000 men and women interred in five camps - relief agencies unwilling to cooperate in their resettlement - government officials requesting aid from gay organizations - recognition of UFMCC as the agency authorized to send representatives to the camps to interview the refugees - multiple thousands of dollars needed to underwrite this effort - thousands of sponsors needed *right now!*

As days trickled by, revised estimates of the numbers involved placed them at around 10,000. Somehow the massive nature of the task did not diminish with the statistics. Word came from the Fellowship Office regarding structure and personnel and the slow financial response of churches already touched by the bleak hand of recession. With that news came the calm assurance, we can do it.

Even when the appeal for financial support and the search for sponsors became a pressing local concern, the plight of faceless, nameless Cubans remained a comfortable distance removed from resident concerns. We'll do what we can - attend planning meetings, interview potential sponsors, appeal for financial support - was the prevailing attitude shared by most of us.

Then Rev. Bruce Hughes, UFMCC's representative at Fort Indian Town Gap, Pennsylvania, invited me, in my capacity as Mid-Atlantic District Coordinator, to visit the camp for a personal encounter with the situation. Unhesitatingly I agreed, aware that the opportunity had arrived to translate mere statistics into personal concern. With this thought in mind, my lover and I drove to Pennsylvania to see for ourselves.

***

The road from Lebanon, PA winds down a long valley between the low ridged, moss green mountains. The countryside is serene and lovely in the golden morning sunlight. Coming over a slight rise, our senses are jarred by the abrupt appearance of seemingly endless rows of ugly, squat buildings - two story, white frame barracks with green roofs. The thump-thump-thump of whirling helicopter blades pulls our attention to the broad green landing strip and control tower across the highway from the buildings. Army choppers land and take off like awkward grasshoppers against the backdrop of a nearby mountain. "Fort Indian Town Gap," Bruce says quietly.

Parking in the crowded, unpaved lot next to the landing strip, we cross the road to the large ex-warehouse - one story, whitewashed concrete block with the omnipresent green roof - which serves as office and headquarters for refugee resettlement agencies. Inside, we are greeted by a young, unsmiling MP. Bruce flashes his green badge which gives him unrestricted access to the camp. We are awarded with a slack smile and visitors badges which clip onto our shirt lapels. The MP motions us through and turns his attention back to his book.

Even on Saturday morning the building buzzes with activity. Blue, moveable partitions separate the vast main room into working offices. There are no signs visible, but a large red cross dominates one corner of the room. Passing down an improvised hallway between the partitions, we enter another large room similarly divided. In one corner a sign announces, "Lutheran Relief Committee." A neighboring cubicle carries a sign, "International Rescue Committee."

We enter a cubicle bearing a tacked up piece of cardboard with "CWS" emblazoned in black magic marker. Church World Services is a conglomerate of 14 denominations which has, it appears, begrudgingly allowed UFMCC to work under its auspices. Specifically, the organization has rejected our request for membership and it is the American Baptist Convention which is the official sponsor for our endeavor. The room holds 12 desks and a couple of filing cabinets. In the center are two small, scruffy-looking brown tables which have been provided for Bruce and any assistants he may have. On this day he is accompanied by Jay Gilbert, a gay activist from Boston, who has spent two weeks at his own expense assisting Bruce with the voluminous paperwork.

A couple of female office workers smile pleasantly at us and present themselves for introductions. The majority of the workers ignore our presence and an army officer seated in the corner fixes us with an unfriendly glare which he later turns on us from time to time. It is very hot. Two large oscillating fans stir up the sluggish air without cooling it and the atmosphere is heavy with sweat and radiant unfriendliness. I find myself appalled to consider that Bruce drives five hours a day (2½ hours one way) from Philadelphia to work in these oppressive surroundings. There is not money available to cover housing for him and so far no gay contacts in the area who might assist in this matter.

Bruce has one interview scheduled for the morning. He explains the interview process to us. Since the government does not supply him with names of gay refugees, he must go into the camp periodically and collect ID numbers. These are fed into a computer - there is a terminal in an adjoining room - and a print-out is received on each person. Computer errors are common. The names, in turn, are submitted to the army which sends someone with a bullhorn through the camp announcing the names. If the person hears, he/she goes up to the office for an interview which is conducted in Spanish and lasts for about 30 minutes. This conversation generates seven forms to be filled out for the government, assorted forms for CWS files and a letter to Rev. Bob Arthur in Los Angeles who is directing sponsorship appointments. There are 1,000 known gay men and lesbians at Indian Town Gap awaiting this process.

Government regulations limit Bruce to interviewing men only. The two barracks of lesbians (about 200 women) are waiting for two teams of Spanish-speaking women from MCC New York who are due later this month to conduct interviews. At present, gay refugees at the Gap are being interviewed at a rate of 30-50 each week, with a cut-off date of October 15 already announced for closing the facility there. Any refugees still resident at that time will be sent to Ft. Chaffee, Arkansas.

Juan comes in to be interviewed. He is tall, black and mildly effeminate in manner. Bruce checks his ID - a plastic covered card on a chain with a picture and personal

information. In the course of the next 30 minutes, Bruce asks for a variety of information - education and work background, medical history, prison history, religious background, names of friends or family in the U.S., and where Juan thinks he might want to go. The majority of the gay men at the Gap are in their early to mid-twenties, have been imprisoned in Cuba for being gay, are non-practicing Roman Catholics, and generally unskilled workers with limited education, speaking only Spanish.

Bruce shares with Juan what MCC is and what we are trying to do. He talks about legal restrictions on gays in the U.S. and the problems of cross-dressing, use of make-up, fingernail polish, etc. which are commonly accepted as "homosexual behavior" in Cuba. Juan is anxious to please and assures Bruce that he'll get the word out. The interview is concluded with broad smiles and hand shakes all around. I feel impoverished by my lack of ability to communicate in Spanish.

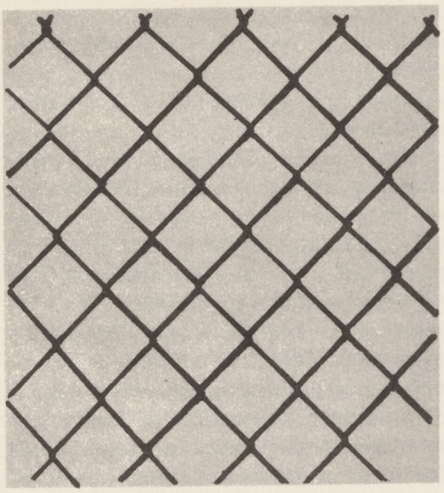
It is past noon when we leave the office building with Jay busily filling out and filing forms - "There's no barbed wire, but there's plenty of red tape," he smiles - and we go to the car. The mid-day heat is intense. We drive half a mile to a parking lot adjacent to the area occupied by gays. Bruce points out the family area, the single men and women's areas and to our left 140 barracks of gay men, 65 or so men to each building. They keep to themselves, he explains, because of continual harassment by the other refugees.

The compound is surrounded by white sawhorses - traffic control devices usually - with a rope strung along the whole length. While theoretically the refugees are free to leave at any time, in fact that rope is more binding than barbed wire. In a strange land without knowledge of the language and lacking necessary ID and work permits, a refugee who succeeded in departing would become a hunted, illegal alien. MP's stationed every 50 feet along the rope perimeter of the camp reinforce the sense of entering a minimum security prison.

As we approach the wooden box which is the sentry post, Bruce explains that the government doesn't want visitors in the camp. He hopes we won't have a problem. As he flashes his green badge at the MP, he receives a nod and a curt order to proceed. We gingerly step over the rope and walk down Service Road, the unofficial boundary line between the gay and non-gay sections of the camp. One of the gay barracks on our left is festooned with drooping red, white and blue streamers left

CUBANS continued on page 23

Cuban refugees



"Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head."

By Dale Leeche

The manger that Jesus slept in that night was borrowed. Borrowed because there was no room in the inn. No one could house these visitors from another city because of the mass of newly arrived citizens. They had not come by choice. Caesar Augustus had ordered them to go - to be counted.

Today, nearly 2,000 years later, people ordered by their government to relocate have arrived in America. Our modern day "Caesar" is known as Castro to most people. The people are Cuban refugees, and apparently, for thousands still left in the refugee camps, there is no room in the inn.

The State Department's Cuban/Haitian Task Force has sent the Universal Fellowship (that means all of us) a letter commending the hard work being done. But the work is not over. An amazing amount of money (over $25,000 to date) has been raised and over 1,800 Cubans have been sponsored in the gay and lesbian community. Hundreds of hours of work have been accomplished by people who were already busy when this all started. Many homes and hearts have been opened to homeless, unwanted people. Paperwork finally accomplished, new friendships beginning. A new life started. Very commendable, but one hard fact remains. Hundreds of our brothers and sisters are about to face winter in unheated buildings. The same buildings that were not air conditioned during a "record-heat" summer.

These are the ones who did not get to go to Houston. Yet. Houston, where communion is now being consecrated in English and Spanish. Houston, where there is already a Gay Hispanic Caucus that is helping as a support group. Houston, where English and Spanish classes are being taught free - so every one can get a little closer.

These are the ones who did not get to go to San Francisco. Yet. San Francisco, where city agencies have turned out with offers of assistance to the gay and lesbian Cubans. San Francisco, where an extensive program has been set up by the church to aid in finding housing, jobs and food for the newly arrived refugees.

These are the ones who did not get to go to Los Angeles. Yet. Los Angeles, where MCC in the Valley has set up one of the best support groups for refugees in the country. Where Rev. Cypherd compiled the sponsor information packet for new sponsors that is now being used all around the country. Los Angeles, where even the entertainment industry is helping, including a benefit concert by Ms. Della Reese.

These are the ones who did not get to go to any one of hundreds of smaller cities across the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii. Yet. Cities that are all working hard to accept these new immigrants. To make their transition to a new culture as easy as possible. To teach them a new language, start a new job, begin a new life.

These are the ones who have not been sponsored. Yet.

So you thought about it . . . not quite sure. Should I sponsor a Cuban? Should I take the risk? Is there room in the inn?

Then the press started its usual coverage of the news - the bad news. A problem here, a hijacking there. These Cubans sound like nothing but trouble. It's funny, though, how the 115,000 or so gays and straights who have been sponsored and are quickly turning themselves into good, hard-working "citizens" never make any headlines. All the rewarding experiences of sponsors who took Christ's words literally to "Love thy neighbor," just seem to be left out of the six o'clock news. Good news doesn't seem to sell papers or keep the ratings up.

So I ask you to think again. And if you haven't already - give of yourself. Open your heart, your home, your wallet or your schedule. Give your love, your spare bedroom, your dollars or a few hours of volunteering. There's plenty left to do. Won't you help us find room in the inn?

Feedback

FEEDBACK continued from page 7

doctrine for all members of UFMCC. The more fundamental point of her article seems to be lost on those who wish to take her statements as literal and universal doctrine for the church. It is a point sadly lost, for it is that the Incarnation is continuously present among us, though I, too, have some reservations about the specific manifestations she gives this. But, she has given us the seeds of thoughts that are not dangerous at all, for she has again expanded our concept of God and brought that concept into the living realities of our daily lives.

Now, I am ready to see serious arguments against Reverend Hamilton's positions in future articles, and I think she, too, is enough of a seeker to welcome critical exhanges of views in print. One of the problems our Fellowship has had, I think, is that we have only a limited educational outreach to our members; since we don't have a Sunday School tradition for our adult members, there is only limited time in too many of our congregations for real study of the Word, of the church, and of the implications of daily Christian commitment. If IN UNITY is forced to remain only intellectual pabulum of platitudes of the faithful; pictures of conferences, confrontations, marches, and buildings; and gossip columns documenting the mobility of members of our denomination; then we can expect little, if any, Christian growth through this potential vehicle of education. On the other hand, if we stop treating our members like children and demand of them responsible, adult thinking, we are going to grow and develop real strengths within the diversity of opinions that will emerge.

One of the problems of education, of course, is that to teach responsibility the educator must give responsibility. There is a real risk here. The student may not be ready to take on the responsibility. But, we are not tossing the student into the river and watching her drown before our eyes, nor are we letting one magazine serve as the sole Christian support system he may receive. IN UNITY, no matter how powerful it may become in the Fellowship, will not supplant the Bible and other Christian literature in our Fellowship. IN UNITY has not been issued from Mt. Sinai (Los Angeles has not usurped that locality, nor does it want to). The written Word of the Bible remains the balance for this and all other Christian literature, and explorations of new ideas are entirely appropriate within its pages -- even with THE GAY CHRISTIAN as a separate publication.

As a committed lay person in this Fellowship, I am insulted with the perceived need of some board members and some clergy (certainly not all by any means) to protect their lay members from the free intercourse of divergent ideas. I am as insulted by this attitude as I was insulted by the "Save Our Children" campaign, for they are, at root, the same issue: censorship. In his introduction to one of the finest plays in the English language, George Bernard Shaw writes something I think all of us need to remember:

> When the Church Militant behaves as if it were already the Church Triumphant, it makes these appalling blunders about Joan and Bruno and Galileo and the rest which make it so difficult for a Freethinker to join it; and a Church which has no place for Freethinkers: nay, which does not inculcate and encourage freethinking with a complete belief that thought, when really free, must by its own law take the path that leads to The Church's bosom, not only has no future in modern culture, but obviously has no faith in the valid science of its own tenets, and is guilty of the heresy that theology and science are two different and opposite impulses, rivals for human allegiance.
> [George Bernard Shaw, *St. Joan* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1951, p. 33).]

Especially in our Fellowship which is composed as Reverend Brenda Cisneros-Hunt pointed out (September/October 1980 IN UNITY) of all of us who would be called heretics at various points in Christian history and heretics by many "Christians" today, we must keep in mind that that Christianity which is learned not through recitation of pious phrases but through direct experiences of living, that is learned not through being lectured (sermonized) to but through ministry with, that is learned not through abstract studies but is experienced through practical applications of the Living Word -- this kind of Christianity is more powerful, more lasting and more effective. Yes, there is herein a risk that the seeker will lose sight along the way, but there is constantly the ability to correct that sight, to regain it, and to learn from the experience.

It is time to let the laity of our denomination experience the pain and the joy of trying to define in contemporary terms just what it is to be a follower of Christ. It is time to let in the fresh air of ideas and to throw open those closet doors of censorship, especially of a censorship that has lied to us so often in the past about our very selves. If we really believe that God is the God of Truth, all quests will eventually come to that Truth, for it is unified and singular but may be viewed from multiplicious vantage points. Let's let the laity grow up -- stop saving us from our rightful Christian growth. Let the children become adults, for herein lies real, and lasting, salvation through Christ.

Dick Follett
North Bay Village, FL

8

Dear Ms. Scott:

Several years ago I worked as a general assignment reporter for a daily newspaper. In that position, I learned to write good news copy, to be concise, and most importantly, to know the facts before I began to write about a particular situation. Apparently that is a lesson you have never learned.

You have chosen to pillory MCC of the Resurrection because we returned 150 copies of the June/July, 1980 IN UNITY. You have done so in print, in the September/October, 1980 IN UNITY, in your editorial entitled "Censorship." It is sad that you never bothered to ask us for our side of the story before writing the editorial. Because of your actions, we are now receiving snide comments from people throughout the Fellowship, who also do not realize the true situation.

I received a letter from Rev. Brenda Cisneros-Hunt, pastor of MCC-Detroit. Her final remark to me was: "Too bad you didn't see the last IN UNITY; I thought it was pretty good. What's wrong with your board?" I would like to share with you

and with the readership of IN UNITY part of my reply.

"We order large numbers of IN UNITY each month, because it has been our practice in the past to distribute it to visitors. As soon as the magazines arrive, copies are given to all members of Board and staff for our perusal (staff is *required* to read each issue). Copies are also sold in the bookstore.

"We got our copies and we began to read them, and many of us were alarmed by comments Shelley Hamilton made in her article 'The Trek.' I don't think anyone disputes her right to believe as she wishes . . . However, as you certainly know, many people who come to an MCC for the first time are deeply troubled, frightened about being in the church at all, and hardly in a position to make a distinction between the basic doctrine of our churches and a new thought someone has advanced.

"The Board did not make the decision to send the IN UNITY back. Christian Service Area IV did . . . we have divided the members/ friends/outreach of the church into four Christian Service Areas: CSA I - Inreach/Outreach; CSA II Worship; CSA III - Christian Education, and CSA IV - Administrative . . . Each CSA has a minimum of two Board liaisons and two staff liaisons, but the bulk of each CSA is lay people.

"I was in the CSA IV meeting in which we decided to send back the IN UNITY. There were three or four Board members there, two or three staff members and about 35 lay people who decided that it would be inappropriate for us to give the copies to visitors because Shelley's comments would most likely throw them into a gigantic tailspin. Never at any time was any attempt made to keep church members from reading IN UNITY. In fact, I have seen several xerox copies floating around, and I have passed round my copy to various members who wanted to see it."

We believe that mature Christians can handle new ideas, and so we do not "censor" material for our membership. We are aware, however, that people who are seeking answers and hope for the first time cannot always deal with abstruse theology, and so we refused to distribute the IN UNITY because we did not want to be responsible for driving away even one soul who might not be able to deal with conclusions reached in "The Trek."

Our reasoning was very sound. What happened to yours? You are the editor of IN UNITY, and yet you sanctioned anti-doctrinal statements in the pages of IN UNITY, and then had the temerity to mock us for refusing to be so spineless.

MCC of the Resurrection stands by the decision of CSA IV because it was the correct decision to make. At the very least, you owe our church (and especially our Board of Directors) a published apology for your comments. You have abused your position by biased and incorrect reporting, and you have an obligation to make it right. If you do not, you obviously lack the maturity, competence and good judgement necessary for the position you hold, and I would be delighted to hear of your immediate resignation.

This is the real world, and if you cannot resist taking childish potshots at an adult response, then let us have someone who will.

Yours very truly,

Virginia L. Galloway
Deacon - MCC of the Resurrection
Houston, TX

9

Dear Ms. Scott:

I couldn't refrain from writing any longer . . . . It seems some subscribers are dissatisfied with the new format of IN UNITY' Since I just subscribed (apparently right after the split between IN UNITY and THE GAY CHRISTIAN), I haven't noticed a "difference." I am so excited each time I receive my copy of our magazine that all my other mail gets put aside (even the personal letters). I am in full agreement with Marge Ragona about accepting the different opinions, even if we don't agree with them.

Last September I moved from Atlanta, Georgia to Juneau, Alaska and found (much to my dismay) that the closest MCC was in Anchorage! Shortly after that I subscribed to our two magazines - and they are *all* that keep me in touch with MCC. I can't begin to tell you how important to me IN UNITY is! Especially considering the fact that, although I have met a few gay people here in Juneau - none of them have ever been involved with MCC.

I look forward with great anticipation to reading the articles by "Papa" John. I left Atlanta just as he was taking over the pastorate, but met him in Tampa a couple of years ago and feel like he is my "home pastor."

The poem by Pepper Shields, "In Spite Of You" was superb. It gave me a thought to ponder and accept - I thank you for printing it. Also, the article "MCC According to M*A*S*H by Nancy Wilson was particularly interesting and enjoyable since I share her enjoyment of the TV program. It was fun to finally realize *why* I liked the program -- yes, it does seem to be very analogous to life in MCC. Now I can't wait to watch it again.

That about sums up my feelings for IN UNITY and the articles it contains. Thanks again for a great magazine. I'm anxiously awaiting the next issue.

Sincerely,
Marci Bolt
Douglas, AK

10

Dear Editor:

I am deeply disturbed about the article written by Shelley Hamilton in the June/ July 1980 issue of IN UNITY. I want to stand up and be recorded, proclaiming that Jesus Christ is God, is Savior and is Lord, as written in the Scriptures, is worthy of all Praise, Glory, Honor and Worship.

Romans 9:33: "As it is written, Behold I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and a rock of offense, and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed."

I may not have a college degree (head knowledge) but I do have a saving personal relationship with Jesus (heart knowledge). And no one will be able to take that away from me.

I do feel it's time that the editor, Board of Elders, directors and staff re-evaluate their commitment to Jesus Christ, UFMCC our church, which was founded on this rock, Jesus. If we allow it to be infiltrated by heretics and allow them positions of authority in our church God's Holy Spirit will leave our church and this fellowship will perish.

In Jesus' Love,

Steve Valett
MCC Quad Cities
Davenport, IA

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usually based on slight, doubtful or irrelevant evidence.

Many times over these last twelve years I have been asked to describe *my own* theological beliefs. I have always answered that I consider myself an "evangelical." "You mean you are a fundamentalist?", some people ask. I always tell them no. To me a fundamentalist (at least in America) is a person who borders on being a religious fanatic, who has lots of fun, nothing mental and lots of 'isms' throughout their religious experience. You are only a Christian if *they* believe you are one and even that can change from day to day.

And yet, in the UFMCCs you can, as a member, describe yourself as a fundamentalist, Evangelical, liberal, liturgical, conservative, orthodox or none of the above, as long as you are a Christian. We have never had a witch hunt in our Fellowship to decide which group of believers in the UFMCC are doctrinally "pure." About eight years ago, we did have one Church leave us because we were not "charismatic" enough, and another the same year because we were not "liturgically" correct. We have lost a few ministers and a few members who wanted the Boards of their local MCC's or the District Coordinator, or the MCAC, or the Board of Elders, or the General Conference to start a witch hunt and we have always said no, resoundingly. There are the same group of people that Jesus condemned in Matthew 23:13-39 as religious hypocrites. Jesus named several kinds. People who kept people out of the kingdom. People who take from the less fortunate and pray long prayers. People who turn others into religious fanatics. People who swear falsely. People who are nit-pickers. People who claimed to be something they are not. People who kill the prophets God sends.

I can assure you the By-laws of the UFMCC are *not* conducive to witch hunts.

> Her-e-sy. 1. Opinion or doctrine at variance with the orthodox or accepted doctrine especially of a Church or religious system. 2. The maintaining of such an opinion or doctrine.

When I visit study groups that are just starting in our denomination, I always try to share with them some of what I consider success stories of our Churches. I tell our members in the study groups that our Churches with the largest growth rates and the least problems are those where the members and ministers keep the By-laws in one hand and the Bible in the other. By that I mean those people have kept informed. The better informed and educated we are, the easier our task will become. Sometimes I have been asked in these young groups, if by joining a local MCC, you as a member, are free to believe anything you want to. I always answer no. If you cannot adhere to the doctrinal statement of the UFMCC, then you should become a friend of our denomination. I point them to the By-laws, Article VII B:

> B. FRIENDS OF THE CHURCH: A local church body may, if it desires, accept into the church persons who, for one reason or another, feel that they cannot become regular members of the church but who support the goals of the church and want to be a part of the work of the church; such people shall be designated as "friends of the church." Friends may serve on appointed committees and may participate in all activities of the church. Friends may not, however, serve on the Board of Directors and may not vote at congregaational meetings. Friends shall not be considered in determining the number of lay delegates which a local church body may send to meetings of the General Conference of the Fellowship or District Conferences.

The Doctrinal Statement found in our By-laws is the cement that holds the government of our denomination together. It is the focal point of our unity.

None of us in the UFMCC likes to think that a member or minister in our Fellowship could commit heresy. In fact, heresy we would like to think went out with the inquisition. The word heresy is not even mentioned in our By-laws.

There are only two grounds given in our By-laws for disfellowshipping a member or a minister and those are disloyalty and conduct unbecoming a Christian.

In the areas of doctrine I can think of several areas where I am sure a member or minister would feel out of step with the General Converence of the UFMCC, who sets our doctrinal statement, and if they persisted to preach a doctrine in conflict with the statement, would find themselves probably charged with disloyalty. For instance: Stating that all gays and lesbians are dying and going to hell, teaching that if you don't speak in tongues you are not a Christian, saying that because we do not observe Saturday as the Lord's day we are the anti-Christ, telling our people that if we take blood transfusions we are sinning, baptizing for the dead and denying the triune Godhead, are but a few I can think of.

> Vi-sion. 1. The act or power of sensing with the eye; sight. 2. The act or power of anticipating that which will or may come to be: prophetic vision.

Where are we going? Who are we? For me, those are two of the hardest questions in the universe.

It is my personal opinion that we, in the UFMCC, are at very important crossroads in our spiritual growth. We are having an identity crisis. We need to again remember who we are. We are heirs and joint heirs with Christ; we are the redeemed of God; we are sinners saved by grace. No more, no less. We are in the world but not of the world. We are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and the people who have not heard are waiting for us.

COMMUNION continued from page 9

> Jesus said --- This is my Body given for you and here is the cup of the New Promise, my Blood, shed for you. This is a gift to you from God so that you can come out of the shadows. When you eat this eternal meal you will draw closer to the light and truth of God.

Leader's Prayer --

> God, thank you for these elements of life. Please bless them now so that we may move out of the shadows and into Your eternal light. Through Christ and the Spirit, AMEN.

Each group takes their respective cup and plate and moves quietly into their separate areas. They may, if they wish, have their own Institution and Consecration. Before they feed each other, they each offer Absolution. They feed each other and then pray. When they are finished, they return to the large group.

Leader Prays --

> God, we have stepped out of the shadow and into your light. We see how vast you are and we sense the greatness of Your love for us. Thank you, God, for leading us into a brighter today. AMEN.

Feedback

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FEEDBACK continued from page 15

Dear Editor,

What would our Lord Jesus Christ say to us today as we continue arguing about who and what articles to censor? Why, of course, to take His liberating Gospel of salvation through His shed Blood and redeeming Grace to all people; to love, help and pray for one another.

We are a "family in Jesus Christ" within UFMCC, and as we should know within a family not all think and act alike though we are united with Jesus Christ and His Gospel.

Therefore, let us once and for all bury censorship and heresy and learn to truly show love one for another as our Lord Jesus Christ taught and lived. We no longer live in the Dark Ages but in Christ Jesus, the Light of the World.

Stephen D. Pfeiffer
Truth Chapel MCC
Tucson, AZ

12

Ms. Scott:

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord. In Unity under your direction has added one more atrocity to its list of many. The worst to date had been the article of absurdity called "The Trek" by the penpersonship of a Shelley Hamilton. Now the editor deems it necessary to ostracize a whole congregation in an editorial. You see it was a decision of our congregation to return the pieces of paper called In Unity. Boards of Directors are elected by their constituency to do their bidding.

It is really unique that you should title your epistle "The Bottom Line." It is! At least rhetorically speaking. You see the bottom line in Christianity is Christ in the triune form.

One gets the innuendo that we should be apologetic. Apologetic for what . . . believing in Christ! Never, my sister, never! If apologies are in order the reverse is definitely true. However, I'm sure that's too much to be expected.

Please receive this note in the Spirit of Christ who said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

Perhaps your inexperience in human communication overshadowed your spiritual awareness.

William Coulter
Chairperson
Christian Education
MCCR - Houston

13

Dear Editor:

Since Rev. Marge Ragona says I am in the back pocket of the Fellowship, would you mind asking her if it is the right or left pocket and what color I am?

In Christian humor and love,

Rev. Elder Jeri Ann Harvey

WORLD continued from page 11

had terrific results in Auckland. When they went there the group was practically non-existant and they are now running at about 60 in the congregation on Sunday evenings. They have applied for mission status and I know are hoping to make an application for chartering as a Church later this year. So, there is much to rejoice about and much to praise the Lord for. Sometimes we feel that movement is slow. We would like to be able to jump ahead in leaps and bounds but if we really are living close to the Lord and trusting the Lord, He will guide us and lead us in the way that we should go. We will see groups form that have a good nucleus of mature, stable Christians, able to work and to carry on and to be there when the numbers grow and people come in needing help.

So, continue to pray and continue to give, we have a whole world awaiting us, a world which needs the Gospel of Love and Liberation of Jesus Christ.

May God bless you, in Christ's service,

Rev. Elder Jean A. White
Executive Secretary for World Church Extension

request articles

IN UNITY plans on running a composite of short articles (with pictures if possible) on being a gay parent. If you are a gay parent and would like to contribute an article please forward it to:

IN UNITY
5300 Santa Monica Blvd. No. 304
Los Angeles, CA 90029

Articles may include personal feelings, coming out to children, unusual or humorous experiences, societal pressures, acceptance, etc.

Advertisement

SHARING AND GROWING

By Rev. Richard R. Mickley, M.A.

Rev. Mickley has taken a leave of absence to obtain a doctor's degree in Clinical Psychology.

He has obtained his master's degree in counseling psychology and his master's thesis is a handbook of enrichment ideas intended for use as a self-help manual for gay men in a committed relationship, or for those who wish they were, or for those who counsel men in committed gay relationships.

The thesis offers a smorgasbord of ideas for sharing and growing together in a way that will enrich their relationship and their lives. It applies sound techniques of marriage therapy and recognizes and interprets factors that are distinctively pertinent to gay men, such as male bonding, high rapport and escalating symmetry.

210 typewritten pages containing self-help ideas for making your relationship what you want it to become, whatever you want it to become.

Special price for In Unity readers. Send $15 to SHARING and GROWING Dept. I, Box 2645, Los Angeles, CA 90051.

Inquiries welcome from bookstores

PRO/CON

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Rev. Jerry Falwell, well known television evengelist and head of the Moral Majority (one of the national anti-gay lobbies), stated, in an article in the Washington *Post* (August 24, 1980), that he could be for civil rights for homosexuals. The Gay Rights National Lobby immediately congratulated Rev. Falwell on his apparent reversal on the issue and challenged him to follow through on his statement by supporting the national gay/lesbian civil rights legislation, H.R. 2074 and S. 2081.

Rev. Falwell, in a Washington *Post* article on the emergence of evangelical political power, stated, "I think we can certainly be for the civil rights of homosexuals without condoning their lifestyle ... I have no objection to a homosexual teaching in the public classroom as long as that homosexual is not flaunting his lifestyle or soliciting students. I would say the same about a promiscuous heterosexual . . ."

The Gay Rights National Lobby expressed astonishment and skepticism at Falwell's statement, but did not hesitate on the matter. GRNL Executive Director Steve Endean sent "letters to the Editor" to the major metropolitan dailies to congratulate Rev. Falwell on his apparent reversal on the issue. Endean's letter indicated that he shared Falwell's apparent view that support for gay civil rights and the condoning of the lifestyle were separate and distinct matters. Endean called on Rev. Falwell, and his organization, the "Moral Majority," to support H.R. 2074 and S. 2081, the national gay civil rights legislation, saying, "Such support and possible testimony on behalf of the legislation at Congressional Hearings would go far toward fulfilling the assertion that you, too, "love the homosexuals."

A telegram to Rev. Falwell, by the Gay Rights National Lobby, suggested a face-to-face meeting to discuss support for the legislation. "We had been under the perhaps mistaken impression," the telegram read, "that you were unalterably opposed to civil rights for homosexuals, and would therefore oppose national legislation to ensure such civil rights. However, your statement appears to indicate far more flexibility in your position on the matter. We would like to suggest a direct dialogue on the issue -- a dialogue we believe would be informative and beneficial for all concerned."

Paul Kuntzler, a GRNL Board Member, expressed severe doubts about Falwell's statement indicating any real change of policy. He pointed out that the statement was made in an article in which Rev. Falwell repeatedly attempted to assure the public that he was not intolerant or a "hard-right" winger. Kuntzler, however, agreed that the Gay Rights National Lobby should pursue the matter to assist in education on the legislation.

CON

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The United States House of Representatives has passed, by a surprisingly large margin of 290 to 113, an amendment to the Legal Services Corporation appropriations legislation (H.R. 7584) designed to prohibit the Legal Services Program from handling gay-related cases, according to the Gay Rights National Lobby. The amendment was offered by the anti-gay leader Larry McDonald (D-GA). Although the amendment occurred on the floor without official advance word, the Gay Rights National Lobby had predicted it and has issued a "Congressional Action Alert" (among other actions) to try to defeat it. A similar amendment to the Legal Services Program passed in 1977 by 230 to 133.

The increased margin of loss can be partially attributed to the political paranoia that has overwhelmed the Congress in this election year. A number of other factors probably played a role in the wide margin of loss. They include: (1) the general political climate which seems to be swinging away from social justice issues; (2) the wording of the 1980 amendment, which alludes to "promoting" homosexuality, and therefore frames the issue in a very difficult way for pro-justice forces; and (3) the wide discrepancy between the funds available to the anti-gay lobbies in Congress and those available to the only full-time gay/lesbian lobby in Congress. Moral Majority and Christian Voice are budgeted for $8 Million this year while the Gay Rights National Lobby was only able to raise $50,000 last year.

GRNL Executive Director Steve Endean described the amendment as part of the election year strategy of Christian Voice, Moral Majority and the rest of the "New Right." "In addition to enacting anti-gay legislation, the amendment was designed to force a role call vote on the issue so it could be used against pro-gay members of Congress," Endean said.

GRNL pointed out that the anti-gay amendment to the Legal Services bill is just one section of the "Family Protection Act" and predicted that enactment of this amendment could release a floodgate of similar amendments, just as it has on the abortion issue. And, like the Legal Services amendment, they could cut off gay access to various government programs.

To compete with these threats the Gay Rights National Lobby urged several actions:

(1) Letters to your Senators urging support for basic civil rights for gays and

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opposition to any anti-gay amendments. Write: The Honorable , Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510.

(2) Collect the names, addresses and phone numbers of as many gay rights supporters as possible and send them to GRNL to help them build the National Constituent Network to assist in generating pro-gay constituent mail to Congress.

(3) Join or contribute to the Gay Rights National Lobby. "The political times are obviously very difficult and the threat that our progress to date may be eroded is a very serious one. To do the job necessary, we simply must have stronger support from the gay and lesbian communities. We will not be able to match their efforts when we can raise just $50,000 while the opposition has $8 million available." Membership dues are $20 and above and contributions may be sent to GRNL, Post Office Box 1892, Washington, D.C. 20013.

***

SEATTLE, WA -- "We're really a close group. That's what I love about it. We all really care about each other. It's the best group I've been in in my life!" exclaimed Ruth, a 19 year old member of "It's Just A Phase Players," an outgrowth of the Gay Youth Summer Theater Project sponsored by the Seattle Gay Community Center and funded by the City of Seattle. Ruth is one of 14 lesbians and gay men between the ages of 18 and 21 who are developing an original theater piece entitled "Lavender Horizons" which premiered August 21 at the Cornish Auditorium in Seattle.

The project was the result of an idea formulated by Michael Hanrahan, a staff member of the Gay Community Center, for a project that would provide employment, job skills training and a support group for low-income young gay people. The City of Seattle accepted the proposal as a project of the City's Summer Youth Employment Program and provides funding with CETA monies. Project participants receive minimum wage for nine weeks while they get intensive training and experience in creative writing, promotion, printing, carpentry, set design, lighting, costuming, music, choreography, acting and all other aspects of producing professional theater. Their work also includes visits to printing shops, costume rooms, rehearsal halls, backstages of local theaters and local theater performances.

Project directors are Sylvia Salget and Stella Mifsud.

"It's very exciting. This is the first project of its kind with gay youth that we know of in the country," explained Mifsud. "It's an opportunity for these young gay people to get affirmation on stage for being who they are."

"Lavender Horizons" which will include drama, music and dance, is being developed from these young people's own experience of being young and gay. The material not only deals with the oppression they have felt as gay people, but with their experiences of ageism, racism and sexism.

Dominic, 18, explains, "It's real hard being gay and young. It's lonely. There's no place to go, no number to call." Most of the young women and men in the group had no other gay friends their age until the Theater Project.

"You don't meet other gay people your age. There are no activities for young gay people. Until now all my friends were older, but, by and large, older gay people don't want to deal with you. They tell you to go home and come back when you're older," explains Julie, an 18 year old.

Many of the Players had dropped out of high school before graduation either because of the verbal and/or physical harassment they got for being gay or because of the intense pressure to conform to conventional models of what a teenager is supposed to be.

Only one member of the group is still at home with his parents. "They just pretend that it's not real; that I'm not there," he said. The rest are trying to make it on their own in a world that does not welcome them.

Paul, 21, says, "It's important to make a public stand for other young gay people to show that they're not alone, that they can support each other."

B.J., 21, adds, "We're going to show that young people have sexuality, that we can make choices about sexuality. It's time to take the blinders off!"

EDITORIAL POLICY

In Unity is the official news and opinion journal of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

We realize our three-fold purpose: to inform, to interpret and to entertain.

All staff members and contributing writers will be governed by ethical canons including responsibility, freedom of the press, sincerity, truthfulness, accuracy, impartiality, fair play and equality.

In Unity will strive not to be sexist, racist or ageist in its content.

Editorials by the editor or the Publishers will reflect responsible views, backed by research and fact. Contributed articles will express the opinions of the specific writer and, therefore, do not constitute endorsement by In Unity.

Articles on Fellowship news, news about the gay community at large, feedback to the magazine and articles relevant to the spiritual, intellectual and community life of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches are encouraged.

It is the goal of In Unity to be an open forum for opinions expressed by all persons within our Church.

All articles must be written in inclusive language or they will be edited to follow the guidelines of inclusive language as established by the General Conference.

All articles, letters, etc. must be signed or they will not be published. The editor has the right to edit all letters in regard to libel laws. Length of letters will be determined by space provisions.

The editor has the right to refuse to publish any article submitted for publication. Decisions will be based on readability, relevancy and editorial policy.

fellowship family

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

After a long discussion, the South-Port-Parks Parish of the Uniting Church in Australia voted unanimously to extend to MCC Melbourne indefinite tenancy with annual review. Further, this parish asked for more interaction and dialogue with MCC, and investigation of joint services and outreach is being undertaken.

MCC Melbourne participated in services marking the inauguration of the World Council of Churches Conference on Mission and Evangelism, held in Melbourne last month and entitled "Your Kingdom Come."

MCC participated in the formation of the Melbourne Gay Christian Collective. This group, which represents clergy and laity from 6 denominations, is beginning the process of writing theological "position papers" on homosexuality and Christianity to be presented in every Synod, Session and Council meeting in the next year.

Members of MCC participated in a series of Seminars presented by Dr. Letty Russell of Yale Divinity School on the issue of Sexism in the Church.

MCC Melbourne's Multi-media service "Do You Know Where You're Going To?" was aired in Adelaide last week. It is hoped that this service will be re-structured to use as an extension and outreach tool in the District.

Melbourne purchased an electronic stencil cutter to augment the purchase of a new Gestetner last month. It is hoped that outreach through the printed word will increase dramatically, and that the Church can offer a printing service to the Community at a more reasonable price than with commercial firms.

***

QUINCY, ILLINOIS

MCC Illiamo recently held a chartering ceremony. Rev. Elder Freda Smith and Bob Darst, Mid-Central District Coordinator, were special guests.

During the chartering service Rev. Reid Christenson was installed as pastor.

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

Rev. Sky Anderson was one of 300 attending the "National Convocation of Christian Leaders" on Stanford University Campus. It was sponsored by Fuller Theological Seminary and Lowell - Berry Foundation.

MCC San Jose is sponsoring Anderson as part of his continuing education: Resources for Local Church Ministry, New Strategies For Christian Ministry.

***

HOUSTON, TEXAS

Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection held a special service of celebration to license Exhorter Dee Lamb as a professional minister within the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. During the service Rev. Lamb was installed as assistant pastor of MCCR, and delivered the sermon.

Rev. Lamb and her spouse, Billie Stoffel, first attended MCCR in March, 1975. Both became charter members when MCCR was chartered as a full church on April 20, 1975.

After several months of faithful attendance. Rev. Lamb became aware that God was calling her to an active ministry within MCCR. She responded, after a long candidacy period, by becoming a deacon under Rev. Elder Jeri Ann Harvey, who was at that time pastor of MCCR.

Through her service as a deacon, Rev. Lamb realized that her ministry for God should be a lifetime commitment. She became an exhorter in 1977.

During the time that Rev. Lamb has served as an exhorter, she has worked full-time as a registered nurse, reared four children, taken a heavy course load of classes by correspondence and attendance at San Jacinto Junior College and the University of Houston, and has performed the rigorous duties of an exhorter in MCCR. She has also maintained a successful relationship with her companion of over seven years, who serves as Church Treasurer and Vice-Moderator of the Board of Directors of MCCR.

Rev. Lamb designed, implemented and is currently directing the parish families program within MCCR. Parish families are geographical sub-divisions within the greater Houston area, and are used to promote closer fellowship and peer support among the members and friends of the church.

Rev. Dee Lamb

***

FAIRFAX, CALIFORNIA

We are happy to announce the formation of Metropolitan Community Church of the Redwoods to serve Marin and Sonoma counties. The new church will occupy office facilities and hold religious services and other meetings at Fairfax Community Church, 2398 Sir Francis Drake Blvd., Fairfax, California.

The new MCC fills a long cherished dream for many who live in Marin and Sonoma Counties for a Metropolitan Community Church near them. It is the beginning of an expansion of MCC into several Northern California communities.

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Our new church building at 107 South Pine (just off of East Commerce) saw frantic activity in preparation for the first worship services on Sunday, August 3. Building Renovation chairperson Richard Lawrence and a corps of enthusiastic, sweating volunteers cleaned up the yard, repaired the doors and windows, carried off several loads of trash and passed 4½ official city inspections. But the work of restoring the 50 year old structure to its original charm is just beginning.

The new building at least allows MCCSA to offer more services. Formal worship will be each Sunday at 11 a.m., and a service of prayer and preaching will be added each Sunday at 7 p.m. Rap sessions, each Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. will also be transferred to the new building, beginning with the open Board session.

MCCSA's move to its first real home brings opportunities for a more active, more focused church life and for greater outreach and service to our community.

New church building of MCC San Antonio

***

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

The Board of Directors of MCC-Pittsburgh at its July 1, 1980 meeting approved the appointment of Roberta "Bobbie" Dunn, Exhorter, to that position for another one year term.

"Bobbie" is enrolled at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary for the fall term as she continues to prepare for the professional ministry.

***

The Board of Directors of MCC-Pittsburgh recently approved the appointment of Robert E. Peterson to the position of Deacon for a three-year term.

Peterson was installed at a regular worship service. His special area of ministry will be visitation. He has prepared an extensive three-year visitation program.

***

LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

On Saturday, July 12th, Alfredo (Freddie) Gonzalez, a Cuban refugee, arrived in Little Rock, AR from Fort Chaffee to begin his new life in America. He was the first gay refugee sponsored through UFMCC to arrive in Little Rock. Gonzalez has been active in the life of MCCLR since his arrival. Pictured are (L-R) Freddie Gonzalez, John Campea (his sponsor) and Rev. Cathy Elliott.

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

The Rev. Delores P. Berry, who has been serving in the Baltimore congregation since 1977, has been hired as the full-time, compensated Assistant Pastor. During the years that Rev. Berry has been licensed in MCC she has been serving as a non-compensated staff minister.

The congregation in Baltimore has grown, and its ministries have expanded to such a point that another full-time minister was a necessity. Berry is the coordinator of the Cuban Refugee Release Ministry, handles a great deal of counseling and community relations projects. Berry's ministry is a real blessing to the Baltimore congregation and to the Baltimore community.

As a citizen of Baltimore City, Rev. Berry has been nominated "Baltimore's Best." This award was given for outstanding achievement in community service.

***

ALBANY, NEW YORK

Belle Pellegrino, of Providence, RI, has been appointed Worship Coordinator of MCC Good News by District Coordinator Shelley Hamilton.

Pellegrino arrived in Albany on August 9, and was installed at MCC Good News August 10. Her partner, Cindy, and their two children will join her later in the year.

Pellegrino has been an exhorter at MCC Providence for three years, and has twice served as interim worship coordinator of that church. She expects to complete the requirements to become a licensed MCC minister next year.

A special welcoming celebration was planned for the worship service. The Rev. Shelley Hamilton was in Albany that day and preached at the service.

***

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

MCC Tallahassee was arsoned on July 21, 1980. No one was injured and the building was not structurally damaged. However, most of the contents (personal and church supplies) were destroyed. Rev. Bob Angell reported that they had apprehended the person who set the fires.

***

WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

A series of three weekly puppetshows for children was recently sponsored by MCC Worcester, and was performed by its pastor, Rev. Johannes Kuiper and the "Good News Puppets."

Rev. Kuiper, 37, has been a puppeteer since age 7. His Good News Puppets have performed in Holland, Canada and the United States. The puppets have appeared on television in Holland, Iowa, New Jersey and New York and have often participated in worship services.

The Good News Puppets are patterned

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fellowship family

FAMILY continued from page 21

after the old Dutch puppetworld of the Middle Ages and are related to the English Punch and Judy. The hand puppets, some of which now are actually more than 30 years old, have been part of the Dutch scene for centuries. Dutch puppetry is still seen in front of the Royal Palace in Amsterdam every week.

***

Rev. Johannes (Jon) Kuiper was stripped of his ordination by the (Dutch) Reformed Church July 17. This decision followed a year-long battle by Kuiper to have his credentials transferred intact to UFMCC.

Kuiper founded MCC Good News in February 1979, and was worship coordinator until December, when he was called to become pastor of MCC Worcester (MA).

Kuiper, who was a lifelong member and an ordained minister of the Reformed Church, was challenged by that denomination in the spring of last year, when his gayness became known. He had requested that his credentials be transferred to MCC, a common practice when a clergyperson wishes to join a different denomination. But his church refused, and a church court "demitted" (defrocked) him instead.

That decision was appealed and later overturned on procedural grounds. The church went ahead with a new trial. Meanwhile Kuiper had initiated the year-long procedure for becoming an MCC minister.

On Thursday, July 17, the court ("classis") met again at First Reformed Church of Claverack, NY. A small delegation from MCC Worcester made their witness outside; and Jon's spouse, Angelo, was given special permission to be with him during the trial.

As expected, the court found him guilty of being in opposition to the church's teachings on homosexuality and took away his ordination. They did offer to let him remain a member of the church, but Kuiper refused, replying:

"This vote proved that the Classis of the Reformed Church does not believe in the living word of God, from which new truths are yet to be revealed; but this vote indicated that they accept a dead word of God. I therefore demand that my name be removed from the rolls of this denomination."

He says that he then took Angelo by the hand, and together they "proudly" left the assemblage.

He said also that the vote of the Reformed Church "has affirmed the need for the ministry of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, and . . . has affirmed my own calling as a minister of God, to share the good news in the gay community."

Kuiper has now been approved for licensing in UFMCC, and officially became an MCC minister in August.

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ATTENTION UFMCC CLERGY: The National Association of Clergy, the first nationwide organization of clergy of all faiths dedicated solely to the individual welfare of its members, has begun its solicitation for membership with invitations mailed to some 140,000 members of the clergy.

In the planning stages for over a year, NAC is offering prospective members an opportunity to become part of a nationwide organization dedicated to enhancing the professional standing and prestige of the American Clergy.

NAC plans to conduct regional seminars on vital issues affecting the clergy and their congregations, publish a monthly newsletter, maintain its Washington office to represent the Clergy's interest with the Congress and Government agencies, and offer a series of benefits designed to enable clergy to take advantage of group discounts in a number of areas.

A National Board of Advisors, consisting of 12 prominent clergy, will assist the NAC in formulating policies and programs. The Advisory Board will also administer a fund to be established by the NAC for purposes determined by the Board of Advisors.

Membership in the NAC is limited strictly to full time, legitimate members of the clergy, listed by their denominations as active clergy.

Applications for membership can be obtained from the NAC Washington Office or its executive offices at 1300 SW 2nd Street, Pompano Beach, Florida 33060, (305) 781-1560. The annual membership fee is $35.00.

Does your church have news items of interest to the Fellowship? If so, please send them to IN UNITY for publication in "Fellowship Family."

WASHINGTON, D.C.

UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP DAY
OCTOBER 5, 1980
BY THE MAYOR
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, on Sunday, October 5, 1980, the members and friends of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches will celebrate the 12th Anniversary of the founding of the church; and

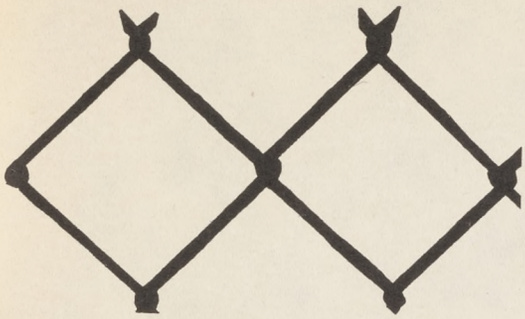
WHEREAS, the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches is the largest international vehicle for public education about homosexuality; and

WHEREAS, the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches is a strong advocate for human rights and social justice at every level of existence; and

WHEREAS, the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches serves to inform and share with established church denominations in the process of breaking down the barriers which for centuries have excluded lesbian women and gay men and has brought human dignity and self respect to the gay and lesbian people of our city:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, THE MAYOR OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, do hereby proclaim Sunday, October 5, 1980, as "UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP DAY" in Washington, D.C., and call upon all of our residents to join with me in honoring and commending Pastor Larry J. Uhrig and each member of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches in recognition of the outstanding contributions which they make to their fellow citizens.

MARION BARRY, JR.
MAYOR
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



CUBANS continued from page 13

over from an impromptu Fourth of July celebration.

The heat rises in thick waves from the pavement as we turn down Mercy Avenue into the gay area. There are a few men on the street most with heavily rouged cheeks and flamboyant feminine mannerisms - others visible through the open windows of the barracks. There are no screens on the windows, no air conditioning against the enervating heat. Noticeably absent is the sound of radio or TV, so otherwise omnipresent in our society. The silent passing of people in the street, combined with the lack of music, creates an unnatural silence in the midst of teeming thousands of people.

Bruce explains that the pronounced effeminacy of the gay men stems from their having no role models in Cuba other than women. In a macho-oriented society they are repeatedly told they are not men. Even those who do not automatically identify with feminine images are frequently forced to wear makeup and women's clothing as a visible evidence of their "degradation."

A waving hand catches my eye and I look up to see Juan grinning broadly and waving from a second story window. We wave back and Juan leaves the window to come bursting out the barracks door a moment later. He greets us warmly and in less than a minute 20 men have gathered. We are invited to visit their quarters and our growing group flows up the wooden stairs into a large open space on the second floor. To the left, a large open room is divided by hanging blankets into cubicles for privacy. Propelled by the group we move into Juan's room to the right. We sit on the bed which has been hastily arranged as a sofa with pillows and a covering blanket.

The room is sterile green, cheerfully papered for a good portion of the walls with pictures from magazines and tooth paste boxes in a star-like arrangement. Thirty or so strong now, the group crowds into the room, sitting on beds and on the floor, standing against the wall, gazing raptly at Bruce. Some run out to find friends and return shortly with them. As Bruce explains briefly who we are and why we are there, eager hands push forward their ID's so that he can take their name and number and hopefully open the door to freedom. The emotion is so intense as to be almost overpowering even for someone like myself who cannot understand the words but can read the excitement and witness the birth of hope in their eyes.

They are gathered around us like children around a loved teacher - faces of black, brown, cream and every shade between - brown, lustrous eyes fixed on this American stranger. For most of them, this is their first contact, their first awareness that someone is working on their behalf. At one point they are all talking at once and Bruce quietly asks them to speak one at a time. Their response is immediate silence. He explains about cross-dressing and use of makeup. A man in the back pointedly slips out of a dress which he is wearing over his pants, dons a shirt and returns to the group. There are more than 40 now, spilling out into the hall, silently passing their ID's forward.

Abruptly it's done. As we stand, the group begins clapping and bursts into a chant which ends with cheering and applause. Later Bruce explains they were chanting, "We're here! We're here! We want sponsors! We want sponsors! And we're gay!" They reach out spontaneously to touch him, to shake his hand. Somehow we are downstairs blinking in the bright sunlight. Two young men holding hands shyly approach and ask if they can give Bruce their names. They react with excitement when he nods affirmatively. As we walk through the silent streets others come running up, one with a friend he has sought out. From these few minutes of encounter Bruce has over 50 names and numbers.

We return to the rope perimeter and prepare to step over; a nearby MP orders us to stop. We can only cross at the entrance. He motions up the street. We walk along for 40 feet and again try to cross the rope. Another MP orders us to move on. Arriving opposite the sentry box, Bruce requests permission and we step over the rope at the "entrance," wondering at the rigid, prison-like attitude.

When we arrive back at the office, we find a minor crisis. A man has appeared at the CWS desk with papers which are somehow out of order. The two Spanish-speaking staff members are still at lunch and no one knows what to do. Bruce translates for them and for his efforts is rewarded with a frosty smile from a person who had referred to him and Jay earlier that week as "dumb queers."

As we leave the building, I am feeling overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task. Bruce shares that there are far too few sponsors to complete the job. He has interviewed 50 people and been able to place only one because sponsors are not available. We discuss the great opportunity facing America's gay community and the unbearable prospect that we may fail to grasp it.

In Harrisburg we stop at a Half-Way House to pick up a fresh-faced young man who had been at Fort Chaffee. He had gone to his sponsor's home only to be turned out and had then come to Indian Town Gap. Bruce is taking him to a new sponsor in Washington. With Bruce as translator, he shares his story - in prison at the age of 15 for the crime of being gay, undergoing a brutal anal search with a billy club by guards looking for money, prison rape and guards demanding sexual favors for cigarettes and chewing gum, a mother in Cuba whom he will never see again.

And the statistics which had become faces at Indian Town Gap become a searing story of brutalization and fear from one winsome young man. He sings for us Spanish songs of haunting beauty and tries to mask his growing nervousness at meeting a new sponsor. We try to reassure him and he responds that he has never had so many people care about him before.

I can describe to you the perceptions of my brief encounter with Gay Cuban Refugees. I lack the words to share the emotion which fills me even now as I write. A people - brothers and sisters of ours - brutalized and terrorized in their homeland - afraid now as they dwell in our government's refugee camps - ignored by the agencies supposedly organized to help "everyone" - and we hold the slender thread of hope for a new life in a new land. More than money, more than good words and kind thoughts, we need sponsors who will open the doors of freedom for them. May God give us the compassion we need to reach out in love.

THE 80's

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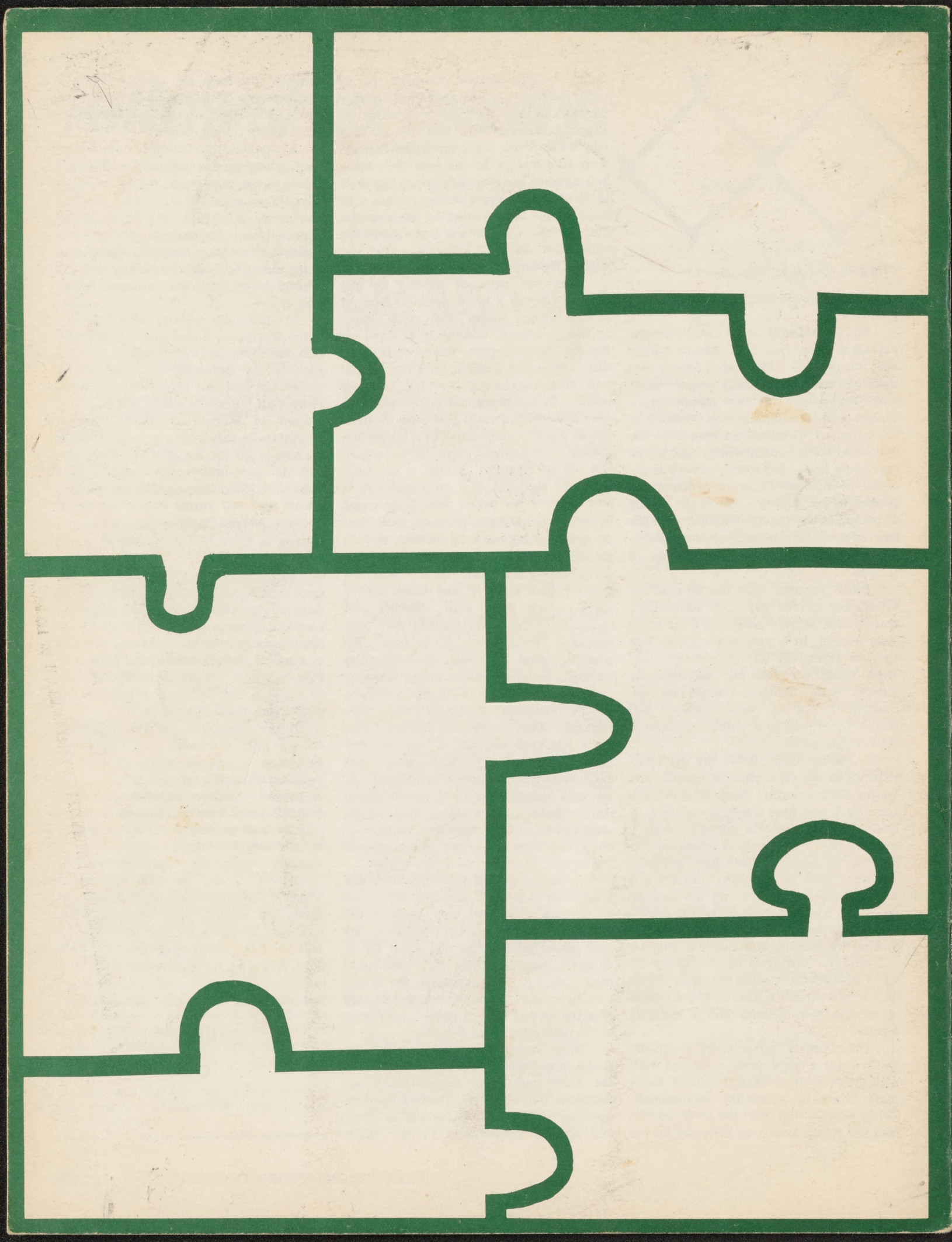
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